



Mario Merz: The Monograph

Pier Giovanni Castagnoli, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

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Mario Merz, the late, great proponent of Arte Povera, envisioned the contemporary artist as a nomad, ever mediating and meditating on the relationship between nature and culture. He began to make work after his arrest in 1945 for anti-fascist activities; confined to jail, he drew incessantly on whatever material he could find. After his release, he painted first in oil on canvas, then began to pierce the canvas--as well as objects such as bottles, umbrellas and raincoats--with neon tubes, symbolically infusing them with energy. In 1968, Merz adopted one of his signature motifs, the igloo, symbol of the transitory artist. At base a metal skeleton, the igloo could be covered with site-specific fragments of clay, wax, mud, glass, burlap, or bundles of branches, and decorated with political or literary phrases in neon tubing. Merz's iconography later came to incorporate the Fibonacci formula of mathematical progression (1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34...), stacked newspapers, archetypal animals, motorcycles and the table, symbol of the human need for fulfillment and interaction. This posthumous monograph is the most complete publication on the artist. It includes documentation of his entire artistic production, including paintings, sculptures, installations, drawings, neon and Fibonacci series work, plus many previously unpublished materials. With a comprehensive history of Merz's career, a bibliography, a biographic chronology and critical essays, it offers a deep and deserving reflection of the artist and his significant role in twentieth-century art.

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